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John L. Stoddard's Lectures

I have heard many lecturers whom I thought Stoddard's superior from a professional point of view, but no other lectures with illustrations have ever drawn one quarter the people to hear them that his did. He has held first place as a stereopticon lecturer for twenty years and retired with a fortune. Men and women have said to me: "What is the secret of this man's success?" My only reply is: "The people like to hear him. I like to hear him."

Major J. B. Pond, *Eccentricities of Genius: Memories of Famous Men and Women of the Platform and Stage* (1900), p. 302.

This issue of the *Gazette* is slightly shorter than usual in the interest of getting it out as soon as possible, as issues continue to lag behind the actual seasons. Our feature article is by Rianne Siebenga, a magic-lantern scholar who completed her Ph.D. at the University of Utrecht in The Netherlands in 2015. Her dissertation deals with visual representations of British Indians in magic lantern slides, films, and postcards from 1870 to 1915. Her article in this issue is adapted from the magic lantern slide portion of her dissertation, focusing particularly on the depiction of fakirs and snake charmers in colonial India in the slides used by American lantern lecturer John L. Stoddard, with comparisons to depictions in later motion pictures. Her approach to studying magic lantern slides was discussed in an interview with Sarah Dellmann, previously published in our email newsletter: http://nation-other.wp.hum.uu.nl/files/2014/11/interview-rianne-siebenga.pdf.

The remainder of this issue is devoted to a number of reviews of books of potential interest to magic lantern collectors and scholars. Chief among these is a very scholarly new book by cinema and media historian Charles Musser which explores the key role played by the stereopticon in American political campaigns in the 1890s. Many *Gazette* readers probably have seen pictures from *Harper's Weekly* and other newspapers showing election results projected on the sides of buildings. However, many may not be aware that illustrated stereopticon lectures were important in the campaigns themselves, getting the messages of the two political parties out to a wide audience in the days before television and the internet. By exploring online databases of newspapers, Musser has revealed much new information about the role of the stereopticon in American culture.

Other books reviewed here include a fine study by Helen Groth of the interaction between magic lanterns and other optical devices and Victorian literature. There also is an interesting book relating popular science demonstrations to stage magic, with frequent mentions of magic lanterns. Finally there are two brief reviews of visually spectacular books on other optical devices.

My backlog of articles for future issues has been largely depleted, so please consider submitting your research to the *Gazette*.

Kentwood D. Wells, Editor
451 Middle Turnpike
Storrs, CT 06268
kentwood.wells@uconn.edu

John Stoddard's India: Fakirs and Snake-charmers in a Comparative Perspective

Rianne Siebenga
riannesiebenga@online.nl

Although the two images of a fakir and a snake-charmer in Fig. 1 and 2 might appear to have little more in common than their provenance, i.e. John Stoddard's Lectures on India, and the fact that both are seated on the ground, they can actually be considered in the same breath. Around the turn of the nineteenth century the Indian fakir was on the one hand known as an ascetic, on the other as a conjurer and magician. This becomes all the more clear when it is taken into account that snake-charmers and conjurers from, or pretending to be from India, were often called 'fakirs.'

Figure 1: 'Fakir', *John L. Stoddard's Lectures* vol. 4, 134.

Figure 2: 'A Snake-charmer', *John L. Stoddard's Lectures* vol. 4, 26.

John L. Stoddard was one of the stars of the American magic lantern circuit of the 1880s and 1890s, initially presenting images from the United States, but slowly venturing further afield even into Asia. He was not the only one, nor the first, to bring images of fakirs and snake-charmers to a western public (**see back cover**). They were among the best-known representations of India during British rule.[1] In the nineteenth century, travelers would always include 'description[s] of Indian holy men and [especially] their austerities.'[2] In literature, the fakir often was used to bring horror into the story.[3] Ascetics formed a favorite topic for European painters and engravers from the seventeenth century onwards.[4] Their austerities were drawn in great detail, depicting a large variety of positions and activities, not shying away from the more painful or extreme.

For the British administrators in India, the fakir as ascetic became representative of all they believed was wrong with Hinduism and indicative of its lack of civilization. These ascetics 'belonged to one of many Indian monastic traditions of social detachment and spiritual discipline.'[5] Their perceived austerities, organization and wanderings were considered a nuisance and even a threat to the order of the colonial state. In the texts accompanying the images in this article this understanding of the ascetic is often summed up in the word 'fanatic'. A fanatic connoted someone who was overly zealous, frequently in their adherence to religious activities, as the word originates in the Latin word for temple 'fanum.'[6]

The term fakir, however, was multifaceted. For many, the understanding of the fakir as a magician had positive connotations and this was at least as widely spread as of him as an ascetic. Ever since Marco Polo brought stories of Kashmiri conjurers who could bring about a change of weather or produce darkness, Europeans had been intrigued by 'India's mystery men.'[7] By the nineteenth century Indian magicians began visiting Britain, which led to an 'Indian-conjuring-hype' whereby British conjurers took Indian-sounding names, such as the 'Fakir of Oloo' and performed Indian tricks. This trend

was not limited to Britain alone. The French magician and film maker Georges Méliès was one of the first to bring tricks onto the moving screen, reaching a worldwide audience. As early as 1896 he created a trick film with a fakir as a main character, simply titled 'Le fakir.'

To gain a better understanding of Stoddard's use of the fakir, it is first of all useful to locate his images and the accompanying text in the framework of British colonial ideas concerning India. Secondly, a comparison with other magic lantern presentations on India and early film will reveal to what extent Stoddard's approach was unique.[8] This article will therefore use John Stoddard's lecture on India as starting point to explore the representation of the fakir as both ascetic and conjurer in magic lantern presentations and on early film. While the representation of the fakir as a conjurer or juggler belongs mainly to the realm of film, the representation of the fakir as religious mendicant is most prevalent in magic lanterns. In lantern presentations, there is an evident tension between colonial ideas concerning the uncivilized nature of fakirs and the fakirs shown in the images.

In film, filmmakers not only used the travel film or travelogue to depict fakirs and snake-charmers, but much more frequently the trick film. As the trick film had its origins in European conjuring traditions, the history of Indian conjuring in Europe will be discussed, as well as a George Méliès' film figuring the character of the 'fakir of Singapour.' First, Stoddard's view of India as well as the British administrators' dealings with fakirs throughout the nineteenth century will be probed in further detail.

John Stoddard's India

Stoddard traveled to Asia in 1892, visiting Japan, China and India, as a preparation for the lectures he would give from the next year onwards. Stoddard was well-known for the thoroughness with which he prepared his lectures. Scholars have noted the careful construction of his lectures, which ended in a climax with a description of 'the most striking sight he had seen on the trip', as well as the role of his own personality within the lectures and images.[9] However, little attention has been given to how exactly he constructed his lectures in relation to the places he visited. To truly understand how he worked, it is essential to comprehend this, as his lectures certainly did not follow the most likely geographical route he had taken, but rather followed his own rhetorical needs.

In the case of India, it is noteworthy how reliant he was on and how much he was influenced by official British colonial discourses on India. Even his personal experiences fit almost exactly with these. While he might have read British literature on the subject, much of the ideology was probably also spread through missionary writing in the USA.[10] The dominant themes in his Indian lectures are India's current lack of civilization and the perceived need for British/Western influences in modernizing the country as well as a preference for the glorious past, rather than the problematic present.

To get a sense of the way in which Stoddard constructed his two lectures on India, it is useful to give a very brief overview of their contents. His first lecture opens with his arrival in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and then moves to Bombay (Mumbai), where he emphasizes the virtues of the Parsis, the most 'Westernized' of all Indians.[11] Via Jaipur, where a modernizing maharaja (ruler) has introduced street lights, he brings the listener to Benares (Varanasi). Benares, as a spiritual center of Hinduism, becomes the epitome of everything that he believes to be wrong with this religion and, by extension, with India. Relieved to leave this behind him, Stoddard then escapes to the 'pure air' of the Himalayas and specifically the town of Darjeeling where he ends his lecture.

His second lecture starts in Calcutta, and from there he turns to India's Islamic Mughal heritage by traveling to Delhi. Wondering if the British will ever leave buildings comparable to the Mughal palaces, he turns to the uprising of 1857, in those years better known as the Mutiny, when Indian soldiers from the British Indian army revolted against British rule. He describes in detail what happened in Delhi, Lucknow and Cawnpore (Kanpur), with special attention for the actions of the Raja or ruler of Bithur, better known as Nana Sahib, who was believed to have treacherously killed a large number of British men, women and children during the uprising. From the Raja of Bithur it is a small step to the contemporary princes, whom Stoddard does not deem fit to rule, arguing that therefore the British occupation is 'a blessing to India.'[12]

The last town he visits is Agra, enabling him to come to an appropriate conclusion for his lecture with an extensive, lyrical description of the Taj Mahal, understood as the monument of love of the Mughal ruler Shah Jehan for his wife Mumtaz. While both the mountains around Darjeeling and the Taj Mahal are certainly striking sights with which to end a lecture, they are also very much sights of which British colonial discourses approved. Stoddard therefore did not find striking sights. He knew which sights were considered striking: the mountains of India, where Hinduism was nearly absent, and the Muslim past. Contemporary India offered him very little to admire.

This becomes particularly clear in his treatment of ascetics and snake-charmers, which will be used as an example of Stoddard's treatment of India. But before turning to the lectures themselves, it is necessary to sketch the contours of British ideas concerning ascetics.

The British Fear of Fakirs as Roaming Mendicants

To the British rulers in India, fakirs, as ascetics, were first of all representatives of what they believed to be wrong with Hinduism, India's main religion: the idols, the temples, the perceived filthiness of the holy places. They also were representatives of the error and superstition with which the British considered India to be pervaded.[13] Essentially, fakirs represented much of what appeared to inhibit British dreams of modernizing India.

As if this were not enough, the dress-code of the fakir was extremely disagreeable to the British, as certain groups of ascetics believed nakedness connoted a 'higher state of being' and many fakirs did not wear more than a loin cloth.[14] The British therefore quite successfully tried to ban the practice of nakedness, outside of religious festivals, as part of their civilizing mission. This did not, however, lessen their preoccupation with covered or uncovered fakirs, who in their partial nakedness, still formed a threat to colonial dignity, control and orderliness. Visually, the other side of the coin was formed, as Philippa Levine argues, by the image of the naked Indian fakir as 'one of the stock characters of the male iconography of primitiveness.'[15] Nakedness could thus be perceived as both a threat to and a lack of British civilization.

For the British there was more to the ascetics than just their religious inclinations. Their wanderings and lack of stable place had made them the target of continuous British attempts to control them. These efforts culminated in the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which endeavored to fix 'criminal tribes,' including many of the ascetic groups, to one place and to know individuals' places of abode at all times.[16] Although this law created a sense of control, festivals and pilgrimages remained a time of nervousness for the British, since the presence of large numbers of ascetic warrior groups reminded them of the ascetics' willingness to fight the East India Company earlier in the nineteenth century.[17]

Magic Lanterns: Fanaticism Ascribed

The 'wandering' fakir was a very popular subject for lantern shows, and nearly always appeared in lectures on India. The religious ascetic became the stereotype the lecturer could use to bring 'horror into the story,' as was done in literature. As Stoddard's lecture chronologically belonged to a later period than many others, I will keep him until last.

In magic lantern readings, a fakir is sometimes defined as a Hindu 'who ha[s] made vows entailing great personal discomfort and even torture, as a penance for sins.'[18] According to the missionary W. Yorke, these Hindu ascetics are easily 'distinguished by their long hair and nails, which are never trimmed or cleaned, and also by their dress. This is neither more comely or substantial than the fashion that prevailed before fig-leaves.'[19] Once, a reading makes an effort to explain that 'fakir' was officially meant to denote a 'Mohamedan religious mendicant,' who is 'of unclean habits.'[20] All in all, the texts thus anchor the fakirs in difference, and this usually is not a desirable difference. It is the negative aspects, which the colonial administration foregrounded, dirty and out of order, that are mentioned.

While seemingly educating the public about fakirs, the readings appear to enjoy narrating the more exceptional aspects of a fakir's life. The descriptions focus on the extreme vows the fakirs have made and on the extraordinary consequences of those vows: 'in fixed positions for long periods; walking on clogs filled with sharp spikes…standing on one leg for many days together.'[21] 'Others hold up one arm, and some even both, till the limb becomes withered and immovable. The hands are held closed till the finger nails grow through the hand.'[22] According to the readings, it is not always clear why these fakirs take up these vows:

> It is difficult to analyse the real feelings which prompt men to lead such an existence. It cannot be the greed of gain, because they usually lead most simple and abstemious lives. It shews remarkable, although it may be purposeless, endurance, resulting from fanaticism.[23]

Ultimately, the reading argues, the reason the fakirs chose this life is because they are fanatics, falling outside the orbit of ordinary people.

The engraving used in *The Popular Lectures for the Magic Lantern* confirms this judgment to some extent, in the sense that the ascetics are shown living outside of a town or village (Fig. 3). It shows a tree under which a temple stood, and around which fakirs lived in the area near Surat, a major port on the west coast of India. The engraving itself is testimony to the way in which images traveled and were re-used. It was originally made by Picart, a Frenchman, in the 1720s and formed part of a book on different religions.[24] Picart's work was translated into English in 1733, and this is how the engraving entered the British image-world.[25] *The Popular Lectures* precedes

Fig. 3: 'Group of fakirs,' *The Popular Lectures for the Magic Lantern*, E.G. Wood, slide 12.

the actual description of the slide by introducing the eccentricities of fakirs, stating that 'some of them vow to preserve a standing posture all their lives, supported only by a stick or rope under their armpits, some mangle their bodies with scourges or knifes, others wander about in companies telling fortunes.'[26] Only the fakirs in a standing posture can be clearly seen on the slide.

The spectators are then told that they see a group of fakirs under a sacred banyan tree next to the 'pagoda of Mamaniva.' There 'are various groups of these miserable men, who remain in one position all their lives.... One [of them] has his face muffled up lest he should swallow the smallest insect, another Fakir is feeding animals out of charity.' Although the fakir with his face 'muffled up' is in the center of the image, the fact that the text first highlighted the fanatical aspects of the fakirs and defined them as 'miserable men,' is an attempt to move the spectator away from these gentler and friendlier aspects. The text wants the listener to remember the fakirs as 'miserable,' but the image, in contrast, is a rather lively combination of what many spectators will have considered eccentricities, and does not necessarily imply 'misery.'

The differences between this engraving and the photographs in the other lectures are striking. If the engraving showed fakirs in a variety of positions, the photographic slides tend to depict something far less gruesome than the texts discuss.[27] In the reading India in the North-West, the title of one of the slides is 'The Temple at Kurterpoor.' The most remarkable circumstance connected with it is the number of fakirs, 'fanatics who are in the habit of visiting the shrine.' The last paragraph of this description turns the attention to a temple nearby, where 'several thousands of these Fakirs [are found], some of them living in graves they have prepared for themselves within the sacred precincts of the Temple. As soon as they die the corpse is built into the grave.' The text directs the spectator not to the temple of Kurterpoor itself, represented on the image, but rather away from the image, to the 'fanatical' fakirs.

The next slide in the reading does portray a fakir. The image is of a Brahmin, on pilgrimage, visiting all the shrines of the 'Devi' (Fig. 4).[30] He has been traveling for six years and has now accomplished about one third of the journey. In contrast with the other slide descriptions, here an explanation is given for the long hair of the ascetic: he has vowed not 'to wash or allow his hair to be shaven until his task is accomplished.' This is exceptional, because in most instances long hair is commented upon, but not explained, leaving it to be another inexplicable aspect of the fakir. Interestingly, the text stays quite close to the image when it describes his hair as 'coiled around his head like a bundle of rope' and his face as 'covered with mud.' However, the fakir portrayed is ultimately of no great relevance to the reading. The description for this slide turns to more exceptional fakirs who sit in graves, but come back to life, with a famous story of a fakir who visited the court of the Punjab ruler Ranjit Singh.[31] Again, the text directs the viewer away from the still image to the more exciting stories surrounding fakirs.

Fig. 4: 'A fakir' lantern slide, *India in the North-West*, slide 32A .

Most of the readings are anchored squarely in the official British Indian knowledge of fakirs: their dirt and their eccentric behavior that seems to be without reason. However, even though judged extraordinary, there is less emphasis on the dangers the fakirs could pose to the colonial state than in administrators' writings and actions. Instead, the readings make a spectacle of the consequences of the vows the ascetics made, moving beyond a didactic approach to a sensational one. This spectacle is nonetheless not mirrored in the photographic images, which appear almost to shy away from this sensational approach.

John Stoddard uses exactly the same slide as described above (Fig. 1 and 4), but with very different effect, when detailing the abhorrent and fanatical aspects of fakirs in the second part of his lecture. He builds his entire description of the fakir around this one image, discarding the information that the photograph was taken in Benares and using it freely for his description of the fakirs in the Kali temple in Calcutta. It is worth quoting his expression of the horror these men evoke in him:

> Within the precincts of this temple [the Kali temple in Calcutta] we beheld several specimens of Indian fakirs, each of whom seemed a combination of beggar, fanatic, impostor, and political spy. In a disgusting area, resembling a garbage heap, a score of these men were seated, entirely naked, up on a mound of ashes, in which they rolled repeatedly. Not content with the results thus gained, they even rubbed the dirt all over their bodies, which had been previously greased in order to retain it. Their hair, matted with filth, nearly reached to their waists, and was painted yellow, on this they threw occasional handfuls of dust and ashes.... A sickening feeling...came over me at the sight of this human degradation.[32]

Stoddard completely follows the British colonial book with his focus on the dirt and filth surrounding the fakirs, and proves he has done his reading of colonial writings when he calls them beggar, fanatic, spy and impostor. He makes no attempt to explain the religious context of the physical characteristics of the fakir.

Stoddard does not just describe the image or the life of an ascetic, as the North-West reading does. Neither does he make any attempt to create an understanding of the fakirs' motifs, describing everything from his perspective. What he does is, first of all, to bring the image to life, by introducing the scene in front of his eyes as 'resembling a garbage heap' and narrating the actions of the ascetics, even if they do not quite confirm to the image he shows (there is no matted yellow-painted hair hanging down to the waist, for example). Secondly, he brings his emotions into the narrative. By expressing his own sentiments and staying with his own perspective, he was probably able to evoke corresponding emotions in his audience. The result is a much more compelling narrative than the one in the North-West reading.[33]

The context Stoddard provided for this image attempts to make it utterly horrifying. The photograph itself, even though estranging, is not horrifying. Stoddard nevertheless sticks to his theme when he brings his discussion of the temple of Kali and its fakirs to a close with 'A wail from India's coral strand' in which he decries the nakedness and filth of the priests and all the rest of India.[34]

While in Benares, Stoddard at a certain point feels 'heart-sick from the inspection of the temples' and turns to the pilgrims in Benares, who 'despite their personal unattractiveness...rivet attention and awaken thought.'[35] Although many of the pilgrims have become ascetics or fakirs, as they have taken vows and are begging for their living, Stoddard does not treat them exactly the same. Whereas he was horrified by the fakirs, he feels sorry for the ordinary Hindu, to whom life is 'a desperate struggle to escape from future suffering.'[36] A photograph (Fig. 5) is shown of a man subtitled 'a fanatic,' referencing Stoddard's description of the pilgrims in his text, because of the sacrifices they make to go on this pilgrimage: 'toiling for months on dusty roads beneath a burning sun, and begging by the way for sufficient rice and water to sustain them'.[37] The combination of

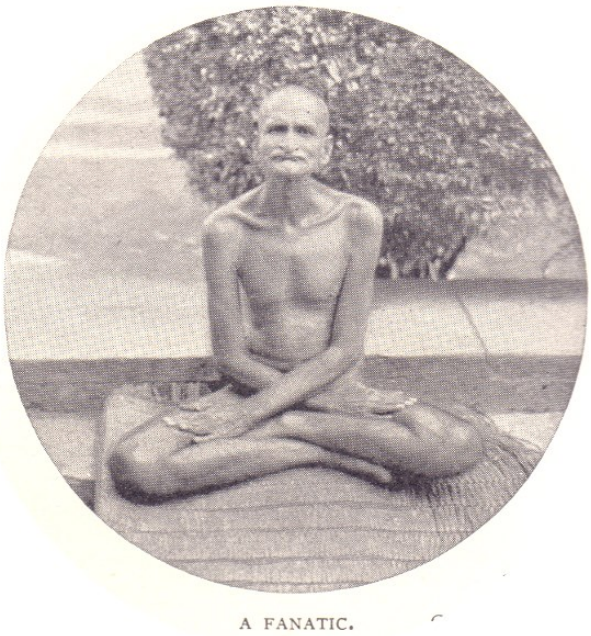


Figure 5: 'A fanatic', Lantern slide, *John Stoddard's Lectures* vol.4, p. 90.

the term fanatic and begging connects these pilgrims with the fakirs, because Stoddard defined the latter as 'fanatics and beggars.'

The 'fanatic' in this picture comes across as rather serene, not quite worn down with his vows. There is no sign of him walking on a dusty road; instead he sits on a neat pavement. Nor is there a burning sun, since shadows are conspicuously absent.[38] If anything is conspicuous, it is, again, the nakedness of the ascetic. He looks confidently into the camera, and in that very moment also meets the gaze of the photographer and ultimately of the spectator. This confident look defines him as someone who is not broken down as Stoddard would have him, but rather 'self-sufficient' and not in need of any civilizational reform. Stoddard verbally tries to convince his public of the desperate state of Indians, but in this case his images do not quite live up to his words.

Stoddard's writing is even stronger in its denunciation of ascetics than the other readings, even if they all verbally highlight the shocking elements. The number of ascetics in extraordinary positions in the images I have found is on the contrary rather low. The one image that did show these positions was an engraving, and, if anything, it demonstrated how a change of medium also changed the content of the image. In most photographic images, the ascetics look into the camera, calm and at ease, although frequently only very partially dressed, contrasting with the descriptions to which they have been anchored. The backgrounds in the slides rarely depict the disorder and filth the texts described. The slides therefore do not always convey the meaning the texts intended.

It is not immediately obvious why there is such a strong contrast between image and text. It is possible that magic lantern publishers believed a large size image of a nearly naked man was sufficiently shocking, and indicative of a lack of civilization. Any visual addition of the characteristics described in the texts was therefore no longer needed. Another possibility is that because the danger and fanaticism of the fakir could be set off against something less dangerous by other slides within the lecture, the ascetic could be made as fanatic as the lecturers wished him to be.

The lecturers made him even more fanatic than he appeared to be in other colonial discourses and practices, with the exception of novels. They seem to revel in detailing the most abhorrent aspects of a fakir's life. This displays not an interest in education, the official aim of the travel lantern lectures, but rather an interest in spectacle and entertainment. It is an attempt to appeal to the emotions of the spectators and contrasts strongly with the sedate descriptions of monuments and landscapes elsewhere in the lectures.

'Indian' Conjurers and Snake-charmers in Britain

Stoddard's description of snake-charmers took place in the context of the 'dangers of the wild' in India, including tigers.[39] He compared the snake-charmer to organ-grinders in the USA and appeared to be rather irritated by them. Furthermore he states that snake-charmers always reminded the British in India of the possibility that snakes might turn up in their houses. Although there is no space to go into it here, the occasional references to snake-charmers and conjurers in magic lantern presentations are generally more positive. It seems Stoddard's views were rather in contrast to the general opinion on snake-charmers and conjurers, although his two images appear to cater to the public's interest in them.

The two images, Fig. 2 and 6, create a similar impression to the photograph of the 'fanatic': the people portrayed appear dignified and are either engrossed in their activities, or look calmly into the camera, and once again contrast quite strongly with the negative sentiment of Stoddard's words.

Figure 6: 'Snake-charmers', lantern slide, *John Stoddard's Lectures* vol.4, n.p.

Snake-charming was seen as one aspect of Indian magic but Stoddard's lectures pay no attention to other facets of the fakir as conjurer. This in contrast to most films, which were mainly interested in the fakir as a magician. The close connection between early film and magic is well-known, but I will focus on the connection between early film and Indian-inspired magic. I will discuss the history of the Indian fakir in Britain, with a short detour into France. Through a comparison between the appearance of the fakir in trick films and travelogues, I will show how this tradition, on the one hand, could create space for the Indian fakir to be presented as someone capable, rather than in need of colonial civilization,

but on the other hand, never became equal to the European impersonators of the fakirs.

From the early 1800s Indian jugglers and conjurers began visiting Britain, and the British developed quite a taste for their performances.[40] Stories from India about interesting conjuring tricks confirmed the 'Mysticism of the East', even if the tricks were explained.[41] The success of the Indian jugglers and the interest of the public in the tales from India induced European conjurers to turn themselves into magicians from the East.[42] To better achieve this goal, many of them visited India to learn the Indian tricks first-hand.[43] Back in Britain, they would adopt an Indian look and dress as Indian royalty, create an Oriental looking stage and assume Indian sounding names such as the Fakir of Ava, the Fakirs of Benares, or even the Indian Fakir.[44] These imitators took over the role of the 'Indian magician' from the real Indian magicians in Britain.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the image of the 'magic' Indian was so well established that the first magic journal was called *Mahatma*. Its header included, among other drawings, a picture of an Indian snake charmer, clearly perceived to be a type of Indian magician, dressed only in a turban and dhoti.[45] Nevertheless, the rise of the 'Indian' conjurer was not without its dissenters. First of all, because the real Indian conjurers were considered of doubtful repute, it seemed impossible to detach them entirely from the negative colonial reputation of their fellow Indians.

In 1878, the famous conjurer John Maskelyne took up the cause of demystifying Indian tricks, because he thought they threatened the progress and modernity of the West.[46] He was to be followed by many others who exposed the basket trick, the sitting in the air and the mango trick, in which a mango plant grows in a matter of minutes. Notwithstanding this perceived progress from bad Eastern conjuring to great Western conjuring, the conjurer's–and presumably the public's–interest in mystic India remained. A perfect example of this is Maskelyne himself. Although he derided Indian magicians, it seems he still felt his own magic needed references to India. He continued to make theatrical shows with titles such as 'Le miracle du Brahmin,' 'The entranced fakir' and 'The quest for the Mahatma.'[47]

Once cinema established itself as a new medium, professional magicians quickly realized the possibilities of using cinematic effects in their shows. Both John Maskelyne and Georges Méliès were among these professional magicians, while Edison's 1902 'Hindu Fakir' shows an American example.[48] It is not known whether Maskelyne ever made any fakir trick films, but Méliès certainly did. The strong connection between the theatrical tradition of the Indian magician and the moving screen is noticeable in, for example, the title of one of Méliès' films: 'Le miracle du Brahmin,' which is the same title Maskelyne used.[49] In the period 1896–1908, the fakir or Eastern magician was a recurring theme in Méliès' films, as he also made 'Le rêve du radjah,' 'Le rosier miraculeux'—a variation on the mango trick—and 'Le fakir du Singapour,' which I will discuss shortly.[50]

Film

'Extraordinary conjuring.' The mango trick was the first to appear in a British film catalog, and was described in a film entitled 'Hindoo jugglers' by R.W. Paul in 1901–1902. It was cataloged under the heading of 'Original Trick and Effect Subjects' and describes the jugglers as follows:

> Many have read of, but few have seen, the much-vaunted feats of the Hindoo Fakirs. The spectator is transported to the centre of a square in India, where he sees a group of European tourists enjoying the performance of the two Eastern Magicians. While one beats the tom-tom the other places a mango seed in a small quantity of loose earth, and covers it with an empty cloth. Slowly the cloth is forced upward by some power beneath, and on reaching its full height is snatched away by the conjurer. A mango plant…is disclosed, which a Hindoo boy carries away.[51]

The description then continues to detail the basket trick, in which someone is put into a basket and stabbed, only to reappear alive. It is unlikely Paul's film was actually shot in India, as he often created trick films in his studio in London and did not get films from India until 1902–1903. In 1902, the Warwick Company advertised a similar film called 'Hindoo snake charmer and fakirs performing the mango and other tricks.' According to the description the mango trick was marvelous.[52] While this film might actually have been shot in India, its title still, like Paul's description, squarely situates the fakir within the British magic tradition. Consequently, both descriptions are positive about the fakirs' achievements and there is no reference to the possible negative religious aspects of the fakir.

In some cases, where the fakir is portrayed as a religious ascetic, his presence becomes part of official colonial discourses and as such needs to be contained. This is most noticeable in a review of the British film company Kineto's travelogue 'Great Hindu bathing festival' where 'many fakirs [are] among the crowds, and these are all, more or less, repulsive in appearance.'[53] These fakirs are shown as part of a religious festival and only (dis)play their role of religious 'mendicants,' rather than that of entertainers.

Within the context of the festival they continue to threaten the British civilizing mission, as the festival is 'their territory.' By denunciating the fakirs' appearance, the fakirs are distanced from the spectators.

There is a remarkable contrast in the distance between the audiences and fakirs in R.W. Paul's and Kineto's films. In R.W. Paul's film, the spectators are said to congregate in the center of a square to see as much as possible of the tricks. The written description details exactly what happens in the film. The fakirs in Kineto's film are somewhere among the crowd, far from the spectator. The rest of the description gives an overview of what can be seen at the bathing festival, not exactly what happens. This highlights the differences between a trick film and a travelogue. The Hindu bathing festival film is a travelogue, to be watched as a film with long shots allowing the spectator to revel in other places. The 'Hindu jugglers' is a trick film 'constructed to highlight' the tricks, and it probably, considering the square, had a fixed frontal arrangement exactly for that purpose.[54] Trick films were typical exponents of the cinema of attractional display, in which everything was geared towards the best possible display of the attractions of the tricks.[55] If Kineto's bathing festival narrated, and showed, even if in album form, what could be seen during a bathing festival, R.W. Paul's film only showed you the tricks.

Charles Urban's series of films showing fakirs and magicians from India in 1909 clearly distinguishes between the religious fakir and the magicians, and consequently between a trick film and a travelogue. In the catalog, fakirs, snake-charmers, and trained animals are characterized as the most 'eerie' of all Indian subjects.[56] The Eastern juggler, on the other hand, shows a 'masterly and finished performance.'[57] These films as well as 'A magician from Benares' also were advertised in different editions of the film journal *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*. Here, the film of the Indian fakir is no longer described as 'eerie,' but contains 'typical pictures of Snake Charmers and Cobras in active demonstration. A devotee reclining on a bed of spikes, with an environment of cows and other animals – Dancing Monkeys – Acrobatic, tamed and trained goats in a wonderful performance.'[58]

The review in the same issue describes 'the devotee' as 'lean and hungry looking.' Although he is on a bed of spikes, he has 'every appearance of comfort.'[59] The devotee is comfortable, surrounded by innocent animals, and within the text of the advertisement encompassed by the presence of harmless snake-charmers, dancing monkeys, and goats. In this more public forum, the 'magic' disarms any possible threat the fakir might have posed. At the same time the description narrates what can be seen, not what happens, according to the pattern of a travelogue, and therefore keeps a certain distance between the spectator and the fakir.

In contrast, the conjuring of the Indian juggler is advertised as 'extraordinary' and his magic as 'marvelous' in a later edition of the Kinematograph Weekly. The advertisement describes exactly what happens in this trick film: the juggler produces live chickens from eggs, but also changes one chicken into two, which appear 'mysteriously from the magician's mouth and ear.'[60] The magician of Benares also eats paper but ejects it in the shape of a bamboo pole. Out of his mouth come eggs and billiard balls.[61] 'The manipulation of the hands' of the juggler 'is shown on a large scale,'[62] and the magician is filmed 'in close portrait view of the audience.'[63] In both cases the advertisement emphasizes that the picture was made in close up, underscoring the importance of being able to see and know what happens in this, first of all, magic show.

These latter films clearly focus on India as a place bringing forth accomplished magicians. The first film with the fakir and snake-charmer shows the more stereotypical images of colonial India, and therefore stranger to 'the dwellers in western lands' in travelogue form,[64] whereas the later films emphasize the magicians' and jugglers' accomplishments in the form of trick films. Although Indian and not European, the fakirs perform tricks European magicians would also perform. The magical and colonial aspects of the fakir are strictly separated, not just through the creation of different films, but also in time, as the snake-charmer and fakir film was released about six weeks before the magicians.

Two things need to be said in conclusion. First, there is no judgmental discussion of the fakir or other outsiders in the above descriptions at all, with the exception of the 'repulsive' fakirs in Kineto's bathing festival, unlike in lantern lectures. Even if the strangeness of it all is at times emphasized, it is contained within the travelogue form. Second, the more positive entertainment heritage of the Indian fakir takes precedence through the form of the trick film. This contrast between travelogue and trick films is also seen in the films I have been able to watch.

Watching conjurers and acrobats. In order to place the trick films showing Indian fakirs in their context it is helpful to closely analyze a trick film made by Georges Méliès. His film 'Le fakir du Singapour' uses the figure of the fakir for performance of the tricks.[65] The background in the film shows an 'Oriental' palace, houses and palm trees. The female assistant is busy dusting and places a painting of a 'fearsome' looking fakir on a stool. Suddenly Méliès, dressed up as a European magical fakir, appears out

of the painting, at the same time transporting the scene to the Orient. This includes the transformation of the modestly dressed assistant by disposing of her long skirt, under which she wears stockings and a short skirt. The tricks displayed are similar to the ones shown in Urban's 'Indian juggler,' as Méliès makes chickens and children pop out of an egg, which has first been magically enlarged (Fig. 7). The assistant's main task is to admire the fakir until she is magicked from her stool into the egg towards the end. Finally, the fakir puts one half of the egg on his back and waddles off screen like a turtle. Visually the scene is very rich in detail and would probably have been equally rich in color.[66]

Fig. 7: Screen shot from 'Le fakir du Singapour', George Méliès, 4.19 min. Taken from:

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xe4wgj_georges-melies-le-fakir-de-singapour_shortfilms

Fakirs and magicians in India functioned in a different setting and therefore are portrayed differently. Unlike their European counterparts, they had not become an indoor attraction, but usually performed in the open air. Their surroundings and dress were less stylized and formalized. Added to this is the fact that the film makers worked within the knowledge boundaries of the colonial paradigm. In Hepworth's travelogue 'Native life in Ceylon' this disadvantaged the native magicians.

According to the film journal *The Bioscope,* Hepworth's 'Cingalese village life' or 'Native Life in Ceylon' showed 'some quaint pictures among the natives in Ceylon.' It conveys the understanding that native life in Ceylon is interesting, but old-fashioned and probably a little bit strange. One of the pictures shown is a short scene of 'Native magic.'[69]

It is preceded by a scene in which someone climbs a palm tree, introducing the part of the film where the supposedly extraordinary feats of the 'native' and 'native' life are shown instead of street and village scenes. The intertitle announced: 'Should you wish to try – this is the correct way to climb a tree', directly addressing the spectator, but leaving a slightly derogatory feeling.[70]

In 'Native magic,' the two magicians come onto the scene in a completely different setting and the perspective changes from the wide open space of a 'boulevard' to an area enclosed by a balustrade and steps. In the background are some plants. The spectators are made to feel they are watching a performance on a 'primitive' stage. The magicians first attempt to make two snakes point at the correct jug. While they, not entirely successfully, try this, two boys walk straight past the camera blocking the view of the magicians for a moment (Fig. 8).[71]

Fig. 8: Screen shot from 'Native Magic,' Hepworth and Co., 1909. 4.06 min. Taken from: colonial-film.org.uk.

After the snakes are put back in their baskets, which is not shown, the two magicians pick up a piece of material. Each holds one of the upper ends and they shake it to show there is nothing in it. They sit down on their knees, now also holding the lower part of the cloth, creating a screen. Suddenly there is movement behind the 'screen' and a boy appears and walks towards the camera. The magicians walk away and the two men who walked into the camera previously place plates of food (?) in the spaces where the magicians sat, which could indicate this is their payment for performing before the camera. These men are dressed in 'western' uniform and wear a fez, contrasting with the magicians who wear a lungi, a jacket and a headscarf.[72] The scene is followed by an intertitle announcing 'Jumbo, the elephant,' again directly appealing to the public's sense of the extraordinary, rather than providing a simple description.

Even though the visible appearance of these magicians is very different from that of European magicians impersonating Indian magicians, and their magic might not be the greatest that was ever seen (which is why it was not turned into a feature by itself), their appearance is strictly that of Indian magicians. There is no mysticism, only magic. Taking into account the slightly derogatory descriptions as well as the low quality of the filmed sequence, the question arises whether it was a deliberate choice on the part of the filmmaker to film not very impressive magic. Was the film maker unable to find high quality magicians, or did he not want to film the more well-known and impressive mango or basket tricks? Allowing people to walk right through the scene, which could probably quite easily have been prevented, does not help to convince the spectator of the quality of the conjuring. Was the implicit aim to show the public that the Ceylonese magicians could not be equal to British magicians? Here the attractional display of tricks has become subservient to the larger goal of the travelogue, the display of colonial people. The colonial narrative has been thoroughly embedded in the filming and editing, almost as if showing the Ceylonese as less capable than the British was part of its intent.

A second film portraying fakirs, 'A sword dance performed before the King and Queen in India,' was probably filmed by the French company Gaumont during the Delhi Durbar of 1911, when the new King and Queen of Britain visited India, and is clearly a trick film.[74] The King and Queen are notably absent from the scene, but in this way the title claims a sovereignty over India not mirrored in the film. What is shown is an enclosed space, later in the film surrounded by a rope, and crowds of mostly male Indian spectators. In the first two shots a man jumps through a square made out of rope and then through a square made out of iron punted poles.[75] The last shot shows a man who seems to be performing a dance with a sword.

The performing men and their assistants are all clothed only in a loincloth. The first acrobat comes across as quite a fierce character. He regularly looks into the camera which is positioned straight behind the square through which he jumps. His gaze reinforces the spectators' position as a 'voyeur,' seemingly putting them in place: it is his show, not theirs, nor the cameraman's, nor the King and Queen's. In this way he could 'threaten the certitude' – encompassed in the title of the film – 'of [the spectators'] visual sovereignty over the people represented in the film.'[76]

It is not just the gaze, but also the evident competence of the acrobats that threatens this certitude. As a partial solution to this threat, the camera has claimed the best 'seat.' It stands in for the absent King and Queen, while at the same time providing the cinema spectator with the best possible view. It is important to note that this still means the camera filmed the show from the perspective of one of the spectators. Unlike Méliès' film, where the camera was the only spectator and Méliès' trick was clearly a form of attractional display intended for the camera, and through the camera for the spectators, here the attraction appears not to have been created specifically for the camera, but for a general public. This is why the acrobat can consider the camera an intruder he has to put into place, rather than an accomplice who will help him reach his spectators.

These fakirs, as the fakirs in the previous film, are not equal to Méliès: they have no name and no stage to speak off. The visual differences between Méliès' elaborately decorated stage and the empty, temporary spaces the Indian fakirs inhabit, and in the latter film, between Méliès' flamboyant dress and the acrobats' near-nakedness are huge. They are nameless and, as such, primarily representatives of a stereotype: the real Indian fakir. In a direct comparison the 'West' completely overwhelms the 'East.' What is crucial though, is that this real Indian fakir is a magician or acrobat and not a religious ascetic, and therefore depicted less negatively than in the texts in lantern presentations. In the films conceived as trick films, the fakir is someone who has something to offer to the spectator, and now no longer needs to come to Britain but can do this in his own surroundings.

Conclusion

John Stoddard was not charmed by India, but then he was generally not easily charmed by any country.[77] He presented his views clearly and with conviction, as reviews of his lectures testify. His discussion of religious ascetics was only one aspect of this. However, what is noteworthy is that his images are not nearly as repulsive as his words. This is something his lecture shares with many others. Even though lantern presentations largely adhered to the colonial understanding of fakirs as fanatical and wandering in their textual descriptions, their visual representations did not live up to these.

Film in general was more interested in the positive representation of the fakir as a conjurer or acrobat, thereby creating more space for the Indian to present himself. The lantern texts stress the extreme or fanatic activities of the fakirs to foreground the fact that they are out of control: 'fanatic.' In doing so they betray as much interest in the sensational as in the educational. Consequently, the intimation that these people are in need of Britain's civilization becomes even stronger. Film takes a different approach. In adopting the form and mode of address of the trick film, it

it manifests a perception of the fakir as a capable conjurer, who appears less in need of civilizing.

Nevertheless, if nakedness is understood as a marker of primitivism as well as of uncontrollability, then the texts and images collide in their depiction and description of the ascetics' lack of civilization and being out of bounds. However, the confidence and frequently the gaze of the person in the image question this concept of lack, while highlighting the control the ascetics exercise over the way in which they are portrayed and presented. Ultimately, the gazes in many images prevent the full closure aimed for in colonial discourses.

In relying on the European entertainment heritage of the fakir, for filmmakers the trick film became the default mode to represent Indian fakirs. As a consequence, the majority of films found move away from the religious aspect of colonial discourses, instead focusing on the fakir and snake-charmer as magicians. This does certainly not imply colonial influences are entirely absent, or that the tension between these two representations is solved entirely in favor of the Indian magician. This is most noticeable when the conjurers are incorporated in a travelogue, as in the travelogue of Ceylon, with its air of superiority in the intertitles and the meager quality of the magicians. However, when the trick form is used, its form allows the attraction of the 'magic' to become central to the representation.

The trick films even go a step further. By drawing so heavily on existing, but more positive stereotypes of the fakir as a conjurer and acrobat, they have returned him home. It is crucial the films show Indian magicians performing in India, rather than in Britain. While the spectators will not have seen the 'splendor' of a Méliès' stage, they will have seen a skilled performance, with fakirs 'acting' in their own space. If in magic lantern slide images gazes and background prevented the complete closure aimed for in written and spoken texts, film most obviously opened a up a space for the fakir to be, maybe not equal to the European magician, but at least capable and competent.

Notes and References

1. Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 136. There was a wide variety of ascetic sects, but the British ended up calling them by several generic names, such as sanyasi, yogi or fakir. The latter came to be used mostly in popular writings, even though it originally designated a Muslim ascetic. See also W.R. Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1.

2. Peter Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick. How a Spectacular Hoax Became History* (London: Abacus, 2004), 7.

3. Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries* (London: Verso, 1998), 79-85.

4. A famous example is the title page of Abraham Rogerius' *De open-deure tot het verborgen Heydendom*, first published in 1651. Out of the seven engravings, four depict ascetics. In: Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 61. An interesting overview of 'western' images of fakirs through the centuries can be found at F.W. Pritchett's website: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1800_1899/hinduism/ascetics/ascetics.html, (accessed 3 March 2016).

5. Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, 1 (see note 1).

6. *A Modern Dictionary of the English Language* (London: MacMillan, 1911).

7. Peter Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick*, 3 (see note 2). On Indian magic in Europe, see also Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

8. Burton Holmes would have been an obvious choice for comparative purposes, but although he visited India in 1912, it seems he never published this lecture, as it is not part of the ten-volume collection on www.archive.org and I have been unable to locate it elsewhere. Neither did any of the film fragments appear to have come from India.

9. X.T. Barber, 'The roots of travel cinema: John L. Stoddard, E. Burton Holmes and the nineteenth-century illustrated travel lecture,' *Film History* vol.5:1 (1993), 68-84, 77. Michaelene Cox, *The Politics and Art of John Stoddard: Reframing Authority, Otherness and Authenticity* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).

10. K. Narayan, 'Refractions of the field at home: American representations of Hindu holy men in the 19th and 20th centuries,' *Cultural Anthropology* vol.8:4 (1993), 476-509.

11. John L. Stoddard, *John L. Stoddard's Lectures*. Vol. 4 Revised edition (Chicago: Geo L. Shuman, 1912). This edition is exactly the same as the edition published in 1898, with the exception of a few coloured images that were added at the beginning of the lectures, but this has not altered the page numbering. If a name of a place has changed after decolonization, I have added the current name in brackets the first time I mention it.

12. Ibid., 196.

13. Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism*, 79 (see note 1). Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, 4 (see note 1).

14. Kama MacLean, 'Making the colonial state work for you: The modern beginnings of the ancient Kumbh Mela in Allahabad,' *Journal of Asian Studies* vol.62:3 (2003), 873-905, 881, n.17.

15. Philippa Levine, 'States of undress: Nakedness and the colonial imagination,' *Victorian Studies* vol.50:2 (2008), 189-219, 215.

16. Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 122,123.

17. Kama Maclean, *Pilgrimage and Power: The Kumbh Mela in Allahabad from 1865–1954* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 53; Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, 46 (see note 1); Nitin Sinha, 'Mobility, control and criminality in early colonial India, 1760s –1850s,' *Indian Economic and Social History Review* vol.45:1 (2008), 1-33, 18.

18. *Optical Lantern Readings: Calcutta, Rosiebelle and the Dwarf. A Humourous Cure for Intemperance* (London: York and Son, n.d.), sl.35, 14.

19. W. Yorke, *Lecture on India*, published in *Lantern Readings Original and Selected* vol I (5th ed.) (Birmingham: Alfred Pumphrey, n.d.) 301-316, sl.31,32, 310-311.

20. *Descriptive Readings for Lantern Slides, set no. 40: India* (London: Sheppard and Co, n.d.), sl.8. In the reading there is a reference to the International Exhibition of 1862 in London, which indicates it was written before the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, since it seems likely the author would have referred to that exhibition, had the reading been written after 1886.

21. *India in the North-West* (New York: Allan and Bentley, n.d.), sl.32, 47. A version of this reading, titled *Yorke's Lantern Readings: India* was published by E. Marshall in London in 1875.

22. *Calcutta*, sl.35, 14.

23. Ibid., sl.36, 14,15.

24. http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/del-bonta/trace.asp, accessed 6 April 2016. Also Bernard S. Cohn, 'The past in the present. India as museum of mankind,' *History and Anthropology* vol. 11:1 (1998), 1-38, 13-14.

25. In 1883 it was also reproduced in the USA in Frank S. Dobbins, *Error's Chains: How Forged and Broken* (New York: Standard Publishing House), between 216-217.

26. *Popular Lectures for the Magic Lantern: Missionary Enterprise in Many Lands* (London: E.G. Woods, n.d.), sl.12, 9-10.

27. An exception is Yorke, who mentions the ascetic in the image has an iron frame around his neck to prevent him from sleeping, India, sl.31,32, 310.

28. *India in the North-West*, sl.32, 47 (see note 21).

29. See for the image http://www.slides.uni-trier.de/slide/index.php?id=5031566, accessed 12 April 2016.

30. *India in the North-West*, sl.32a, 47-48.

31. It is also mentioned in Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick*, 22, 23 (see note 2). The fakir asked to be buried alive, sitting in a wooden case. After forty days underground and a constant watch at the grave, the case was taken out of the earth and opened. The fakir came back to life after being warmed up with hot water and a hot bread.

32. Stoddard, *Lectures*, 134,137.

33. Rick Altman argues that the use of the first person singular as well as the past tense creates distance between the public and Stoddard, especially when compared with Burton Holmes' use of the present tense and plural 'we.' *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 61. Although this is the case to a certain extent, the example above shows how he could draw in the public.

34. Ibid., 137, 138.

35. Ibid., 89.

36. Ibid., 91.

37. Ibid., 90.

38. Although many of these pictures were taken in a studio and bought by travellers like Stoddard, as probably figures 2 and 6, this particular photograph seems to have been taken outside. The shape of the pavement is very clear, and unlikely to have been introduced outside.

39. Stoddard, *Lectures*, 24, 25.

40. Peter Lamont and Crispin Bates, 'Conjuring images of India in nineteenth-century Britain,' *Social History* vol.32:3 (2007), 308-324, 311.

41. Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick*, 18-23 (see note 2).

42. Sarah Dadswell, 'Jugglers, fakirs, and jaduwallahs: Indian magicians and the British stage,' *New Theatre Quarterly* vol.23:1 (2007), 3-24,9.

43. Michael Claxton, 'Victorian conjuring secrets,' in Albert D. Pionke and Denise Tischler Millstein (eds) *Victorian Secrecy* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 165-178, 175. Interestingly, the French had completely opposite ideas about the native magicians of Algeria, the marabouts. By sending the famous magician Robert-Houdin to Algeria they hoped that 'exposure to French magic would undermine the influence' of the Algerian miracle workers. Murray Leeder, 'M. Robert Houdin goes to Algeria: Spectatorship and panic in illusion and early cinema,' *Early Popular Visual Culture* vol.8:2 (2010), 209-225.

44. Lamont and Bates, 'Conjuring images', 320 (see note 39), and Dadswell, 'Jugglers', 13 (see note 41).

45. Dadswell, 'Jugglers', 11. In the West at this time, Mahatma was synonymous with fakir, or a man with great power. Mohandas Gandhi was a number of years away from receiving this honorary title, meaning 'great soul'.

46. Maskelyne was a strong defendant of 'proper', non-miraculous magic and would attack anyone who seemed not to adhere to this, including spiritualists and members of the medical profession. See Dan North, 'Illusory bodies,' *Early Popular Visual Culture* vol.5:2 (2007), 175-188, 178,179.

47. Dadswell, 'Jugglers', n.49, 24.

48. Edison's film can be watched at http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/yoga/video.asp?id=hindoo-fakir, accessed 8 April 2016. It is obvious this film was not made in India, as magicians in India did not have female assistants.

49. Matthew Solomon,'Up-to-date magic: Theatrical conjuring and the trick film,' *Theatre Journal* vol.58:4 (2006), 595-615, 596. For a more detailed account of the connections between silent cinema and magicians see Matthew Solomon, *Disappearing Tricks: Silent film, Houdini and the New Magic of the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

50. All these titles can be found at http://dvdtoile.com, accessed 3 March 2016.

51. R.W. Paul, Catalogue (London, Season 1901–1902). It was repeated in 1903. The words 'magician' and 'juggler' are often used as synonyms in film descriptions.

52. Warwick Trading Company, Catalogue supplement (London, August 1901), n.6193, 272.

53. *The Bioscope*, 28 March 1912, Supplement XXIX.

54. Frank Kessler, 'Trick films,' in R. Abel (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Early Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2010), 643-645.

55. Tom Gunning, 'Cinema of attractions: Early film, its spectator and the avantgarde,' in Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (eds), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 56-62.

55. Tom Gunning, 'Cinema of attractions: Early film, its spectator and the avantgarde,' in Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (eds), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 56 -62.

56. Charles Urban, Ltd, General Catalogue of Classified Subjects, "Urban", "Eclipse", "Radios" Film Subjects and "Urbanora" Educational Series (London, 1909), n.2320, 245.

57. Ibid., n.2321, 246.

58. *The Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 February 1909, 1132.

59. Ibid., 1161.

60. *The Kinematograph Weekly*, 8 April 1909, 1374.

61. Ibid., 1401.

62. Ibid., 1374.

63. *The Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 April 1909, 1454.

64. Urban, General Catalogue, n.2320, 245.

65. It is available online at http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xe4wgj_georges-melies-le-fakir-de-singapour_shortfilms, accessed 25 April 2016. The fact that this fakir supposedly hails from Singapore seems not very relevant. Peter Lamont quotes the historian of magic S.W. Clarke as saying that 'there was practically no difference between Indian and Chinese jugglers'. Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick*, 38 (see note 2).

66. Even while the Chinese and Indian fakir were perceived to be very similar, it is interesting to see the difference between Méliès' portrayal of a fakir as well as a Chinese magician as discussed by Matthew Solomon. While the magician is the fakir and transforms the stage into a truly Oriental place, it is made very clear that a European impersonates the Chinese magician. Méliès' example is part of a discussion about the imitation of Chinese fakirs. Matthew Solomon,'The "Chinese" conjuror: Orientalist magic in variety theater and the trick film', in Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini, Rob King (eds) *Early cinema and the National* (New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing, 2008), 248-257, 251-254.

67. This film can be viewed at www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/1328.

68. The Bioscope, 1 April 1909, 27.

69. The public would not have distinguished between jugglers from Ceylon or mainland India, but would have considered them all to be 'Indian' jugglers.

70. www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/1328. Tom Rice notes this in his analysis of the film.

71. The two boys were first seen in the previous scene, where they walked towards the camera, before turning sharply to the right. The film makes it seem they have continued their walk and are now arriving at the scene where the magicians are performing.

72. A lungi is a piece of long unsewn cloth used by men. It is draped around the hips and fully covers the legs, unlike the dhoti which is usually taken up higher.

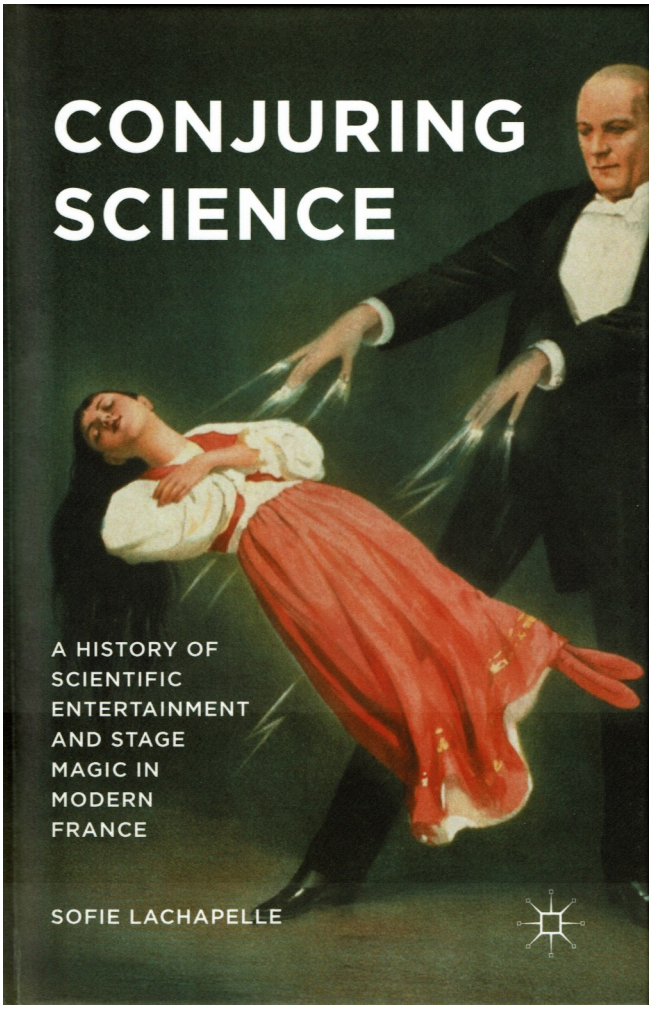
73. Although the atmosphere throughout the film seems to indicate that the Ceylonese are not too civilised, sequences which show street views etc. give more space to the Ceylonese in their daily surroundings and they are therefore able to escape the enforced paradigm slightly more.

74. Watched at the British Film Institute.

75. The pervasiveness of the use of the term fakir is exemplified in the description on www.colonialfilm.org.uk as the athlete and his colleagues are all called 'fakir.' www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/1630 (accessed 20 April 2016).

76. Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology and Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 200.

77. Cox, *Politics and Art of John L. Stoddard*, 50-54 (see note 9).



Sofie Lachapelle. 2015. *Conjuring Science. A History of Scientific Entertainment and Stage Magic in Modern France.* Palgrave Macmillan, New York. ISBN 978-1-137-49768-0. $95.00 (hardcover). 201 pages.

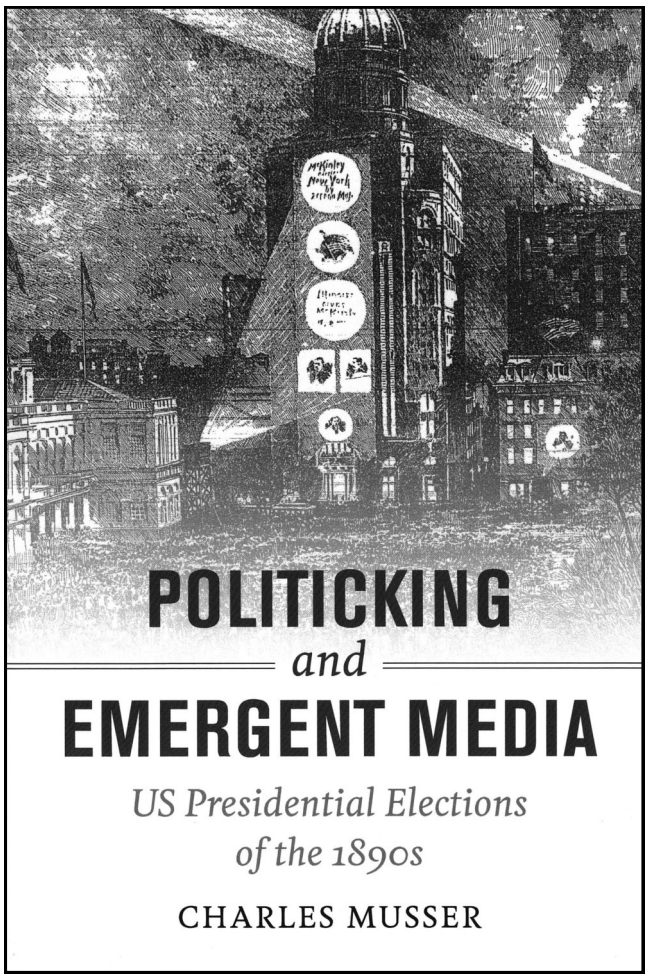
This book explores the intersection between science and spectacle in the form of demonstrations of spectacular effects with scientific instruments, and stage magic as practiced by professional conjurers, mostly in 19th century France. Magic lanterns and the phantasmagoria make frequent appearances, some incidental mentions as well as more extended discussions of shows by Robertson and Philador, and toy

magic lanterns sold in French department stores in the late 19th century for the amusement of middle class families. The author also has extended discussions of French books intended for a general audience on "rational recreations" or "amusing physics," including some manuals of projection techniques. There is even a short discussion of Indian fakirs, the subject of our feature article. In a final chapter on "Magic as special effects," the author covers special effects on the stage, which sometimes involved projections from magic lanterns. The chapter concludes with special effects in motion pictures, especially the trick films of Georges Méliès. The book is written in an accessible style largely free of academic jargon. Unfortunately the author seems unaware of Mervyn Heard's book on the phantasmagoria, or other scholarship published by both magic lantern societies. The book has a few well-chosen illustrations, but none including magic lanterns. As with many scholarly books these days, the high price, especially for a 200 page book, is likely to limit its audience—**The Editor**.

Charles Musser. 2016. *Politicking and Emergent Media. U. S. Presidential Elections of the 1890s*. University of California Press, Berkeley. ISBN 978-0-520-29273-4. $29.95 (paperback). 288 pages.

Charles Musser's marvelous new book is one of the best blends of social and media history yet to appear. Written in a jargon-free accessible style, the book is full of new research that reveals much about magic lantern history in 19th century America that probably is unknown to most collectors and scholars. He focuses particularly on the role of the stereopticon, a fancy name for a high-quality magic lantern, in electoral politics in the 1890s. Probably most members of our society have come across prints from *Harper's Weekly* and other illustrated periodicals of election results being projected on the sides of buildings in New York and other cities, but may not be aware that the stereopticon played a much larger role in elections.

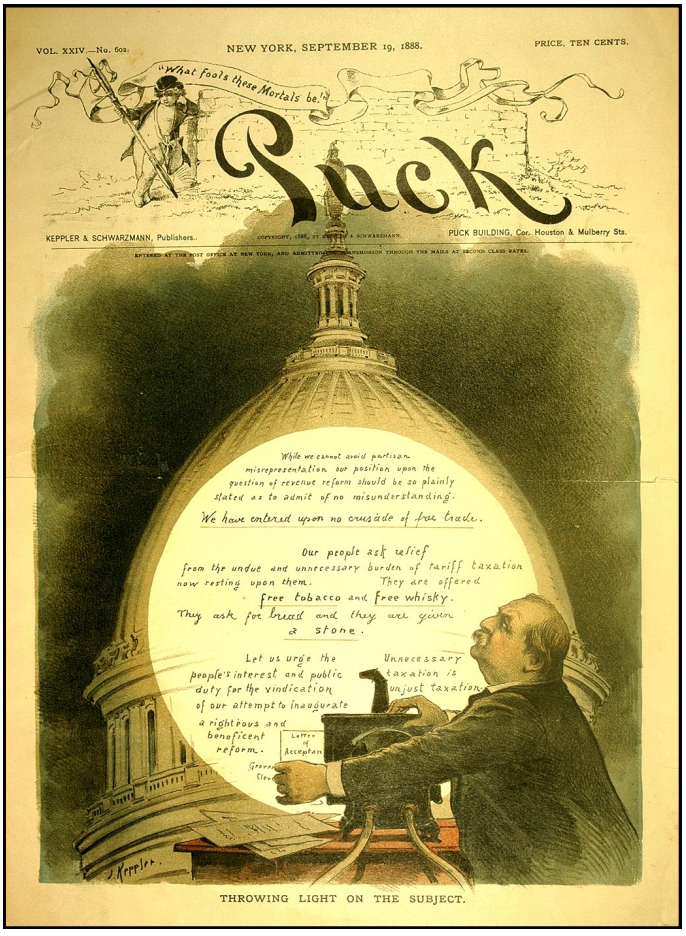
All parts of this book are worth reading, including the unusually long Acknowledgments section, which not only thanks countless scholars who have assisted the author through the years, but also gives something of a tour of the author's development as a research scholar. The 22-page Introduction, which is not given a chapter number, provides a whirlwind tour of the state of American society and politics after the Civil War, as well as the



development of the media, including mass-circulation newspapers and other periodicals, the telegraph, the telephone, the phonograph, and the stereopticon. The author also reviews discussions of the stereopticon and illustrated lectures, or the lack thereof, by previous scholars. Finally, he discusses the many advantages of doing research in the digital age, especially the availability of searchable digital newspaper archives that provided much of the material for this book.

The five numbered chapters of the book do not proceed in strictly chronological order. Chapter 1 begins with the role of the stereopticon in the Presidential election of 1892, a rematch between Democrat Grover Cleveland and Republican President Benjamin Harrison. Cleveland had first been elected President in 1884, only to be defeated in his re-election bid by Harrison in 1888. In 1892, Cleveland returned to become the first and only President to serve two non-consecutive terms in office. In both contests, the main issue was the tariff on imported foreign goods, with Cleveland and the Democrats decrying the tariff as an impediment to economic

growth, while Harrison and the Republicans seeing a robust tariff as a means of protecting American jobs. This issue was widely debated in the pages of the emerging mass-circulation newspapers, especially in New York, at a time when most papers were clearly affiliated with one political party or the other. In 1888, the Republicans wheeled out a new weapon, the stereopticon-illustrated lecture, in particular an illustrated lecture called *The Tariff Illustrated*, developed by Judge John Wheeler. He toured with his stereopticon lecture mostly in the Northeast, especially New York, which turned out to be the deciding state in the election. According to Musser, this was the first time a documentary-style illustrated lecture had been effectively used in a political campaign. Democrats made use of the stereopticon as well, but in Musser's view, less effectively, using lantern slides mainly to project slogans and images of candidates on buildings and outdoor screens, unaccompanied by a lecture.


VOL. XXIV.—No. 602.
NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 19, 1888.
PRICE, TEN CENTS.
"What fools these Mortals be!"
Puck
KEPPLER & SCHWARZMANN, Publishers.
PUCK BUILDING, Cor. Houston & Mulberry Sts.
While we cannot avoid partisan misrepresentation our position upon the question of revenue reform should be so plainly stated as to admit of no misunderstanding.
We have entered upon no crusade of free trade.
Our people ask relief from the undue and unnecessary burden of tariff taxation now resting upon them. They are offered free tobacco and free whisky.
They ask for bread and they are given a stone.
Let us urge the people's interest and public duty for the vindication of our attempt to inaugurate a righteous and beneficent reform.
Unnecessary taxation is unjust taxation.
Letter of Acceptance
THROWING LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT.

Grover Cleveland as a stereopticon man, projecting slogans against the tariff on the Capitol, published during the 1888 campaign by the Democratic-leaning cartoon magazine *Puck*.

Wells collection.

By 1892, illustrated lectures had become even more of a staple of American culture. Wheeler resurrected and revised his *The Tariff Illustrated*, sometimes given it in two parts. This time there were many imitators, with stereopticon men moving from town to town spreading the pro-tariff message. The American Protective Tariff League, the original sponsor of Wheeler's lecture, had six different lecturers on the road, mostly in the Northeast, reprising Wheeler's lecture with varying degrees of success, reaching perhaps 350,000 people during the campaign. The Democrats had largely lost interest in this form of communication; nevertheless, they won the election. As the votes were tallied, the stereopticon played another important role—projecting returns on large outdoor screens or on the walls of newspaper buildings. This sort of projection had been used in a limited way since the 1870s, but really took off in the 1890s.

Chapter 2 goes back in time to analyze the use of terms such as "magic lantern," "dissolving views," "stereopticon," and "illustrated lecture" during the 19th century, using a random word search of the *New York Times*. Musser's survey confirms a pattern revealed in some of my own research published in the *Gazette*, with the emergence of the term "stereopticon" in the 1860s and its gradual dominance as a term associated with lectures in the next few decades. This chapter also reviews the history of the stereopticon from the Philadelphia exhibitions of Fallon's stereopticon by Abel and Leyland in 1860 through the early 20th century. Musser attributes the success of the stereopticon to two main factors: the use of very bright illumination, usually limelight, and the use of photographic slides, pioneered by the Langenheim brothers. These two developments facilitated the use of the stereopticon to reach large audiences and increased the realism of the projected images.

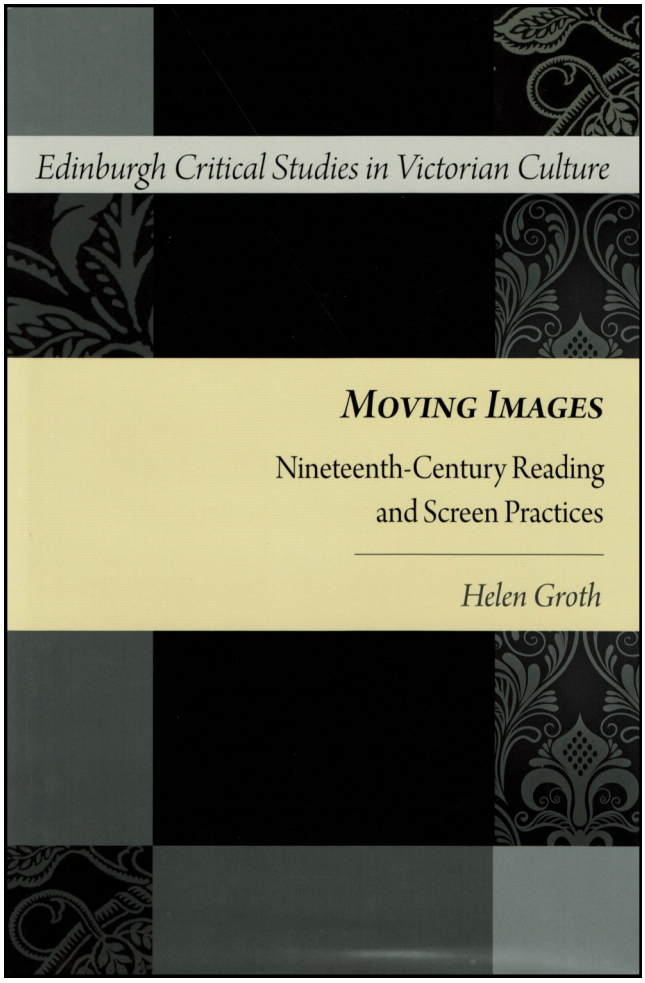
Chapter 3 carries the story to the 1896 election pitting Democrat William Jennings Bryan against Republican William McKinley. By this time, Judge Wheeler had died, and interest in stereopticon lectures as a campaign tool had started to fade, although some Republican speakers gave illustrated lectures at campaign rallies. Democrats showed little interest in illustrated lectures. At the same time, newly emerging motion pictures were integrated into the campaign, especially on the Republican side.

Bryan was known as a great orator and criss-crossed the country by rail, delivering speeches along the way. Recordings of some of his speeches, along with some of McKinley's, were available to the public on Edison phonograph records (often abbreviated versions read by another narrator). McKinley adopted a more leisurely campaign style, spending much of his time sitting on his front porch in Ohio waiting for visitors to come to him. This style of campaigning might seem like poor material for motion pictures, but the premier of the biograph motion pictures in New York included two short campaign films of McKinley strolling across his front lawn and walking the streets of his hometown of Canton, Ohio, talking (silently) to politicians and other visitors, along with scenes of a political parade in Canton featuring McKinley and his running mate. Given that these films may have been the first experience with motion pictures for most people in the audience, the newspapers reported wildly enthusiastic responses to these seemingly pedestrian scenes, as if McKinley had actually been transported from Ohio into the auditorium.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the Bryan campaign's less successful exhibition of motion pictures of his whistle-stop speaking tour, the role of the stereopticon in projecting election returns, and the use of other technologies in the campaign, including the phonograph and telephone.

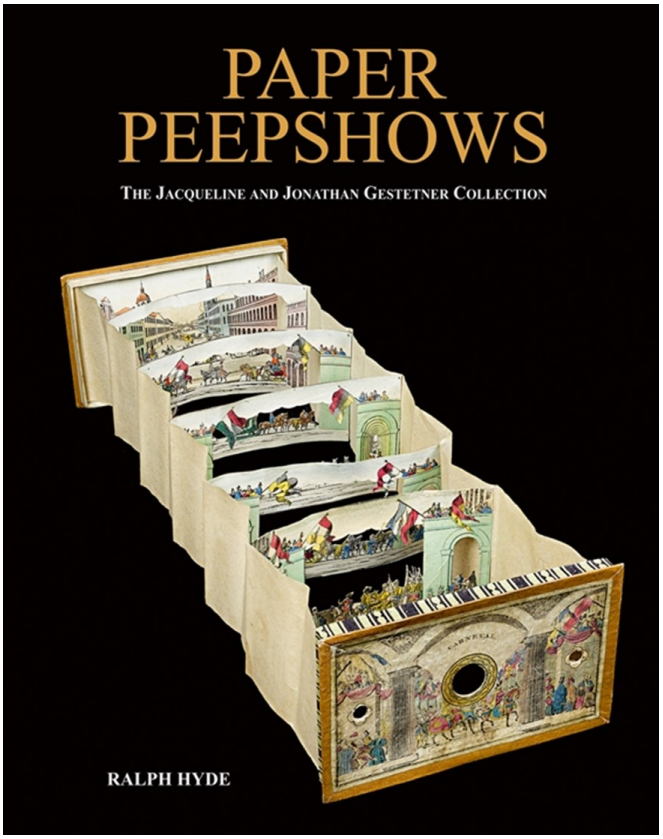
Chapter 4 discusses the rise of cinema as a form of mass communication and its relationship to other mass media, touching on topics such as the use of illustrated lectures in campaigns after 1896 and the continued integration of motion pictures and lantern slides into illustrated lectures after 1900. There is a fascinating section on illustrated lectures with both lantern slides and motion pictures used to promote the imperialist gains made by the United States in the Spanish American War. Companies like Sears Roebuck even provided ready-made lantern-slide and motion picture lectures featuring "our new possessions" such as the Philippines, while simultaneously promoting the most imperialist candidates (McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, who succeeded to the Presidency when McKinley was assassinated in 1901).

Overall, Musser's book provides a richly researched and very readable account of the role of projected media in late 19th and early 20th century social and political culture and sheds new light on the key role played by the stereopticon in American life.—**The Editor**.



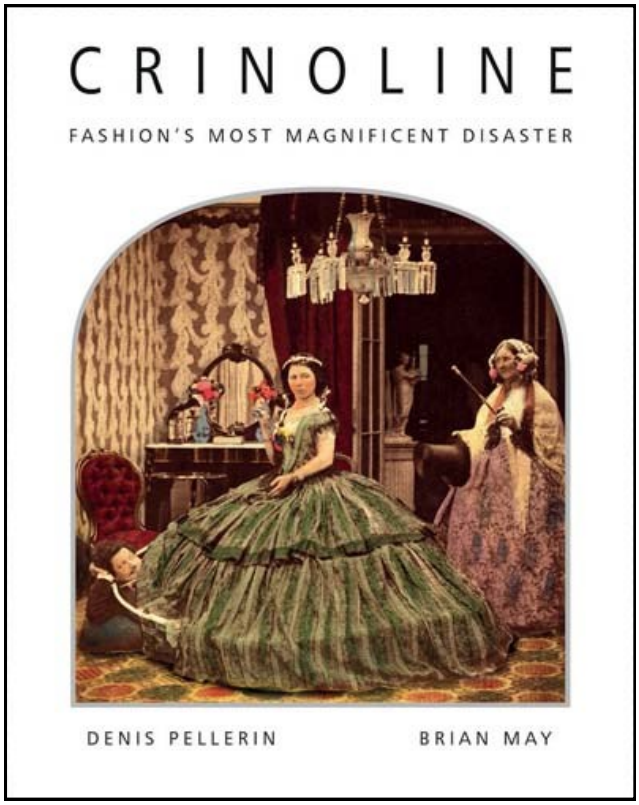
Helen Groth. 2013. *Moving Images. Nineteenth-Century Reading and Screen Practices*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh UK. ISBN 978-0-7486-6948-6. £70 (about $87.50) (hardcover). 212 pages.

Helen Groth is one of the leading scholars who combines deep knowledge of both Victorian literature and magic lanterns and other optical devices. Her book explores the reciprocal relationship between optical shows and reading. Charles Dickens, for example was a fan of magic lantern shows, referred to the streets of London as if they were part of a magic lantern show, and used magic lantern imagery in his writing. His writings, in turn, were widely circulated in the form of magic lantern shows, especially favorites such as *A Christmas Carol*. Pepper's Ghost was used at the Royal Polytechnic to illustrate a Dickens story. Groth explores these connections in a readable style, also covering writings of Byron, Lewis Carroll, Sir Walter Scott, and William Thackeray, and the influence of the writings of Sir David Brewster on optics and natural magic on literature. Readers with an interest in the wider cultural connections of the magic lantern will enjoy this book.—**The Editor.**



Ralph Hyde. 2015. *Paper Peepshows. The Jacqueline and Jonathan Gestetner Collection*. Antique Collectors' Club, Woodbridge, Suffolk, England. ISBN 978-1-85149-800-0. £45 (about $56.00) (hardcover). 270 pages.

This spectacular book should appeal to anyone interested in optical toys and other visual devices. Much of the book is a detailed catalog of the unparalleled collection of paper peep shows assembled by Jacqueline and Jonathan Gestetner and now housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The catalog is introduced by an extraordinarily detailed history of paper peep shows by the late Ralph Hyde, who seems to have tracked down nearly every known fact about these fascinating optical toys, from details of the manufacturers to the street addresses of the shops where they were sold in various European cities. The bellows-like structure of these peep shows evolved from earlier wooden optical boxes with perspective views. They first became popular in the 1820s in cities like Vienna, London, and Paris. Subjects that were particularly suited for in-depth viewing, such as the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851 and the tunnel under the Thames River, were especially popular. Every aspect of the production of this book is beautifully done, from the scholarly introduction by Hyde to the spectacular photography by Dennis Crompton—**The Editor**.



Denis Pellerin and Brian May. 2016. *Crinoline. Fashion's Most Magnificent Disaster*. The London Stereoscopic Society, London. ISBN 978-0-9574246-2-3. $75.00 (hardcover). 224 pages.

This book is another gem from the team of Pellerin and May, who previously brought us *Diableries: Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell*. It tells the incredible story of crinoline dresses that were popular in the 1850s and 1860s in Britain, France, and the United States (where they were generally known as hoop skirts, familiar from movies like *Gone With the Wind)*. The term crinoline originally referred to horsehair undergarments, but eventually was used to describe steel hoops or inflatable rubber tubes that expanded women's dresses. The book explores the history of this impractical form of dress, with anecdotes of women struggling to climb into carriages, sit on chairs, or avoid being set on fire while wearing crinolines. It is richly illustrated with hand-colored stereo cards that can be viewed with the Owl Stereoscope included in a boxed set with the book, as well as contemporary prints and cartoons from humor magazines like *Punch*. There is even a magic lantern motion slide of a woman smuggling food items suspended from hoops under her dress.—**The Editor.**

Lithograph of Indian snake charmers with cobras, a type of image that was widespread in the 19th century, not only as illustrations of Indians, but also of cobras in natural history books. From: *Brehm's Tierleben: Kriechtiere und Lurche* [*Brehm's Animal Life: Reptiles and Amphibians*]. Bibliographisscches Institut, Leipzig and Vienna, 1893. Compare this image with the photograph of snake charmers from John L. Stoddard's lectures on p. 8.

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